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No student could take up these letters without reading them through, and we wish that they were printed separately, as, not half filling the volume, they would be likely to have twice the circulation of the whole. The author next gives us extracts from two of his own college orations, worthy in their moral tone of his present calling and years, and betraying his youth, not by immaturity of thought, but only by the studied euphuism which marks the facile pupil of the rhetorical professor. Next we have Dr. Osgood's genial Address at the meeting of his class twenty-five years after graduating, followed by Rev. Charles T. Brooks's Poem on the same occasion, of which Dr. Osgood says without exaggeration: "If the bulk of the book were but earth, this rose, like that of Saadi's Gulistan, would be enough to sweeten the whole lump." An essay on "The Use of Time," and a letter on "Study in the Country," — excellent in themselves, but, unlike the rest of the book, destitute of any direct pertinency to college life, — conclude the volume.

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28. — *Elsie Venner ; a Romance of Destiny.* By OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, Author of "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," etc. In two Volumes. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1861. 16mo. pp. 288, 312.

WHO has not read *Elsie Venner*, as far at least as the story has appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*? It is superfluous for us to write a word about its perfect characterization, its unsurpassed traits of wit and veins of humor, and its gushes of such tenderness and pathos as show that the author sympathizes with his *dramatis personæ* as heartily as if they were of his own household. Beneath all this, as Dr. Holmes hints in his Preface, and as we had previously inferred from the tale, lay the purpose of presenting, hypothetically and tentatively, a theory with regard to the potency of certain ante-natal physical influences to whose mysterious working *Elsie* lives and dies a victim. But over all and above all, the book has a value almost unapproached in its giving us a wise physician's views as to certain physico-moral and physico-religious states, phenomena, and questions, the discussion of which is usually abandoned to the moralist or the divine, but as to which the medical adviser often has by far the best opportunities of observation and materials for judgment. In the formulas which represent human condition and character there are both constants and variables. The teacher of ethics or religion never forgets the constants, but is very apt to ignore the variables, and the more so in the proportion in which they would affect the final result. Thus he dwells with never-ceasing

emphasis, as he ought, on such cardinal facts in the administration of the moral universe as obligation, accountability, retribution ; but he is prone to be insensible to the numerous cases in which, without absolute insanity, obligation is weakened, accountability attenuated, and the descending scale of retribution equipoised. All these abnormal cases the philosophical physician appreciates ; and he gathers, in his professional walks, many arguments for merciful and kind construction on the part of man, and many hopeful thoughts as to the Divine pity and clemency, which the moralist might admit without reversing a single ethical dogma, and the divine without relaxing the rigidity of his creed. It is for this kindly and genial *calculus of the variables* in human experience that we most of all thank "The Professor," and not only for services of this sort just rendered, but for like offices of mercy in the earlier series of his papers for the *Atlantic Monthly*.

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29. — *What we eat : an Account of the most common Adulterations of Food and Drink. With some Tests by which many of them may be detected.* By THOMAS H. HOSKINS, M. D. Boston : T. O. H. P. Burnham. 1861. 16mo. pp. 218.

IF this book has not the keenness and pungency of the articles on the same subject in the *London Lancet*, it has the still higher merit of accurately guarded and abundantly verified statement, and manifestly that also of a sincerely philanthropic purpose. The author makes an unsparing and detailed exhibition of the frauds ordinarily practised on the chief commodities of table use, and describes the methods by which they may be detected. A large portion of the volume is devoted to milk, to the history and developments of the milk-controversy in the city of New York, and to the construction and use of the lactometer. We trust that the book will have a sufficient circulation to concentrate an array of watchful eyes upon a class of poisoners, who may, in former years, have had the plea of ignorance, but who can no longer ply their foul trades without incurring a very decided taint of the guilt of murder.

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30. — *Ancient Danish Ballads translated from the Originals.* By R. C. ALEXANDER PRIOR, M. D. In three Volumes. London : Williams and Norgate. 1860. 8vo. pp. ix., 400, 468, 500.

THESE ballads are chronicles of the mythical heroic age of Northern Europe, and are faithful exponents of that age, in its superstitions, its